



A. Biblioteca Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1208, fol. 3v, Luke and James (see pl. 38)

PATRONAGE IN  
THIRTEENTH-CENTURY  
CONSTANTINOPLE

AN ATELIER OF LATE BYZANTINE BOOK  
ILLUMINATION AND CALLIGRAPHY

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CONSTITUTION

AN ATTEMPT AT A RECONSTRUCTION

OF THE PATRONAGE AND CONSTITUTION



## INTRODUCTION

The group of illuminated manuscripts which forms the main subject of the present monograph has a unique position in the history of Byzantine miniature painting. It may not be typical of Greek book production as a whole, not even of the late period to which it belongs. But it allows far-reaching conclusions about the collaboration of a team of leading scribes, illuminators, and miniaturists in Constantinople during the early Palaeologan era.

A few general deliberations may be in order by way of introduction. Byzantine manuscripts were products of a highly centralized civilization which perished through violence. Those which escaped destruction during the Turkish sack of Constantinople in 1453 were a small minority, a mere fraction of what once existed. This also applies in equal measure to the larger provincial centers which fell at one time or another to the Turks. It is true that Greek illuminated books reached the Latin West during the Middle Ages in ever increasing numbers; by the time of the Crusades they must have represented a broad stream. Byzantine miniatures were universally admired and highly appreciated; the impact they made on the development of western painting is a fruitful field of research for the student of medieval art.<sup>1</sup> But that impact is also highly elusive: there is not a single surviving Byzantine illumination which can be shown to have served as the individual source of inspiration of a western master.<sup>2</sup> The manuscripts which were actually used by medieval Latin artists must practically all be considered lost, as are the majority of those which remained in the capital. Those which are preserved in libraries throughout western Europe, and which have for generations served to shape our ideas about the development of Middle Byzantine illumination, were mostly acquired in Constantinople by western scholars or ambassadors in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, i.e., after the conquest of the capital by the Turks. In a number of instances we know the precise circumstances of their purchase.<sup>3</sup> More recently, our knowledge has been immeasurably enlarged

<sup>1</sup> Cf. O. Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West* (New York, 1970), *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. E. Kitzinger, "The Byzantine Contribution to Western Art of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *DOP*, 20 (1966), 35, on surviving Greek illuminated manuscripts which were in Western libraries during the Middle Ages. We may now add the Gospels in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College no. 403/412, which belonged to Robert Grosseteste and must have reached England before his death in 1250. Cf. *Robert Grosseteste, Scholar and Bishop, Essays...*, ed. D. A. Callus (Oxford, 1955), 131, 135.

<sup>3</sup> This applies to practically all of the outstanding illuminated manuscripts in the two principal libraries in western Europe which have collections of Greek books, the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; cf., e.g., H. Omont, *Missions archéologiques françaises en Orient au XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris, 1902), *passim*; *Handbuch der Bibliothekswissenschaft*, vol. III, pt. 1 (Wiesbaden, 1955), 159; R. Devreesse, *Le fonds grec de la Bibliothèque Vaticane des origines à Paul V*, ST, 244 (Vatican City, 1965).



when the inexhaustible treasures of the libraries of the Greek monasteries of Mt. Athos and of St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai became available for scholarly exploration.<sup>4</sup> They include many illuminated volumes of stunning quality which they received as pious presents from Byzantine emperors and other wealthy patrons. But comparatively few scholars have an opportunity to study them at leisure; and many remain unpublished. No wonder that a history of Constantinopolitan book illumination presents extraordinary difficulties. Moreover, the systematic study of miniature painting outside the capital, in provincial towns and monasteries, has not yet even begun.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, an attempt to trace the development of style for any given period or within any coherent group of manuscripts should first of all reckon with a considerable number of missing links, more than in any other field of medieval illumination. But there are also more serious pitfalls. The coexistence of several styles in the same place, especially in the capital itself, is now an accepted fact.<sup>6</sup> So is the basically retrospective attitude of Middle and Late Byzantine art which constantly renewed itself by reviving the achievements of past centuries.<sup>7</sup> Up to and including the Comnenian period, these revival movements easily find their place within the overall evolution of style. But after the fall of the ill-fated Latin Empire and the restoration of a Greek dynasty to the imperial throne in 1261 the continuity is broken. In many of the finest works of the Palaeologan period spontaneity is replaced by sophistication. The ancient models are reinterpreted, frequently in a very personal manner. Copying becomes a highly selective and almost intellectual activity.<sup>8</sup> It will be one of the main tasks of this monograph to shed light on the complex interrelations within our group of manuscripts, on their common features as well as on significant differences which exist between its various members. In the end, we shall have to ask the question whether this more or less homogeneous group is the product of an ordinary scriptorium organized on traditional lines, or whether there is a different explanation, which will account for the divergences as well as the similarities.

We know little or nothing about the working methods of monastic scriptoria in the Byzantine capital, not even for the Middle Byzantine period, from which hundreds of illuminated manuscripts survive and which is comparatively

<sup>4</sup> Cf., provisionally, K. Weitzmann, *Aus den Bibliotheken des Athos* (Hamburg, 1963); *idem*, *Illustrated Manuscripts at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai* (Collegeville, Minn., 1973). Recently, the Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies in Saloniki has published the first two volumes of a corpus of Athos miniatures: S. M. Pelekanidis, P. C. Christou, Ch. Tsioumis, S. N. Kadas, *The Treasures of Mount Athos. Illuminated Manuscripts*, I-II (Athens, 1973-75). Further volumes are to follow.

<sup>5</sup> Among recent works in which such material is collected, we may mention A. Grabar, *Les manuscrits grecs enluminés de provenance italienne*, Bibliothèque des Cahiers Archéologiques, 18 (Paris, 1972).

<sup>6</sup> For the early period, cf. E. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Period between Justinian and Iconoclasm*, *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress*, München 1958, IV, 1, p. 116.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. K. Weitzmann, "The Classical Heritage in the Art of Constantinople," in *idem*, *Studies*, 126-50.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Belting, "Palatina-Psalter," 17-38.



well known.<sup>9</sup> We tend to take it for granted that they were more or less organized like those in the Latin West, where as a rule illuminators were permanently attached to individual scriptoria and executed figural miniatures side by side with ornamental decorations. When we speak of a western "school of illumination" we imply that script and artistic decoration, figural as well as ornamental, go together. Concerning the Greek East we are much less certain. There are of course numerous instances where a similar collaboration exists. The group of deluxe manuscripts which includes Vat. Urb. gr. 2,<sup>10</sup> Codex Ebnerianus,<sup>11</sup> and their relatives<sup>12</sup> is a case in point. But that group can hardly be called representative; in its way it remains unique. Moreover, even the identity of most Constantinopolitan scriptoria during the Middle Byzantine period still eludes us. Practically the only exception is the Studios monastery, where at least four outstanding and abundantly illustrated manuscripts were produced in the second half of the eleventh century.<sup>13</sup> Otherwise, only a few single and stylistically isolated books may be connected with individual scriptoria. Generally speaking, no consistent picture emerges, and our knowledge remains extremely fragmentary.

Still another problem has to be mentioned which hardly exists in the book production of the Latin West. In Byzantine manuscripts the figural miniatures are frequently not part of the gatherings, but are painted on single leaves inserted one by one into the places where they belong. Thus the usual intimate relation between text and pictures is broken up. This does not yet necessarily mean that the miniatures were not executed in the same scriptorium as the manuscripts themselves, or that they had not originally been intended to adorn the volumes in which they are now contained. But when they are painted on parchment of a quality different from that of the text pages, when they are cut down round the edges, or when they show a different system of ruling or no rulings at all, the possibility that they were procured from an outside source cannot be lightly dismissed. It is true that significant instances from the Middle Byzantine period are not very numerous. Two may be quoted here at random: the set of full-page illustrations of the Paris Psalter,<sup>14</sup> and the

<sup>9</sup> Cf., e.g., K. Weitzmann, *Byzantine Miniature and Icon Painting in the Eleventh Century*, Thirteenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Oxford 1966, Main Papers, VII.

<sup>10</sup> C. Stornajolo, *Miniature delle omilie di Giacomo monaco e dell'evangelario greco urbinato*, Codices e vaticanis selecti, Series minor, I (Rome, 1910).

<sup>11</sup> C. Meredith, "The Illustration of Codex Ebnerianus," *JWarb*, 29 (1966), 419ff.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts*, 139.

<sup>13</sup> Three manuscripts are discussed by S. Dufrenne ("Deux chefs-d'œuvre de la miniature du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle," *CahArch*, 17 [1967], 177-91), including a liturgical roll formerly in Constantinople and until recently considered lost, but now preserved in the Library of the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad; cf. V. D. Lihačeva, *Iskusstvo knigi: Konstantinopol' XI vek* (Moscow, 1976), 76-81. The fourth work is the Job manuscript in the Sinai Monastery; cf. Weitzmann, *Illustrated Manuscripts at St. Catherine's Monastery*, 16ff.

<sup>14</sup> H. Omont, *Miniatures des plus anciens manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1929), pls. 1-14; H. Buchthal, *The Miniatures of the Paris Psalter. A Study in Middle Byzantine Painting* (London, 1938), pls. 1-14.



miniatures of the Vatican Gospels, Vat. gr. 756,<sup>15</sup> which show the four Evangelists presenting their Gospels to Christ. But in Late Byzantine art the physical independence of text and figural miniatures becomes the rule rather than the exception;<sup>16</sup> and the precise relation of the two becomes an important factor, which cannot be neglected when an attempt is made to reconstruct the procedures employed in Palaeologan scriptoria. In the group of manuscripts with which we are here concerned it is one of the crucial points which will need careful investigation.

That group consists of fifteen manuscripts, all of them containing biblical or liturgical texts: Psalters, Gospels, Lectionaries, etc. They are all closely related to one another, but in different ways: either through their script and illuminated ornament, or through their figural miniatures; and in a number of instances through all three. Most of the figural miniatures are on inserted single pages. The interaction of these three elements makes for various combinations which allow us an unexpected insight into the nature of the collaboration of scribes, illuminators, and miniaturists—so unexpected that one is from the beginning tempted to doubt that this kind of collaboration can have taken place in an ordinary monastic scriptorium. Thus one suspects that our group owes its existence to very special circumstances. As it includes some of the finest illuminated books preserved from the Palaeologan period, the problem is all the more interesting and intriguing. The following Table lists the manuscripts arranged by subject, and within each subject alphabetically according to the sigla introduced by us which correspond to their present locations.

			Plate Nos.	Catalogue No.
		<i>Gospels</i>		
D	Athos, Dionysiu 5	5 headpieces	31	1
F	Florence, Bibl. Mediceo-Laurenziana Plut. VI, 28	3 evangelist portraits 4 headpieces	2-4	7
L	Athos, Lavra A 2	1 evangelist portrait (not belonging) 4 headpieces	37	3
M	Venice, Biblioteca Marciana gr. 541	4 evangelist portraits 4 headpieces	28-30	14
O	Oxford, Bodleian Library, Barocci 31	4 evangelist portraits 4 headpieces	8-11, C	8

<sup>15</sup> Friend, "Portraits," 115ff., figs. 84, 85; H. Buchthal, *Miniature Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Oxford, 1957), pls. 142a, b.

<sup>16</sup> Belting, *Das illuminierte Buch*, 4ff.



V	Vatican Library, Vat. gr. 1158	8 Canon Tables 4 evangelist portraits 4 headpieces	12-20	11
X	Location unknown	8 Canon Tables 4 evangelist portraits 4 headpieces	21-27	
<i>New Testament</i>				
B	Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, W 525	4 portraits 4 headpieces	5-7	6
<i>Lectionaries</i>				
C	Mount Sinai, gr. 228	5 headpieces	32, 33	13
I	Athos, Iviron 30 m	5 headpieces	36	2
S	Athos, Stauronikita 27	5 headpieces	34, 35	4
<i>Praxapostolos</i>				
Vat	Vatican Library, Vat gr. 1208	3 author portraits, headpieces	38-48, 75c, A, B	12
<i>Psalters</i>				
A	Athos, Stauronikita 46	1 author portrait, headpieces	49-55	5
N	Paris, Bibl. Nat., gr. 21	headpieces	56-60	9
P	Paris, Bibl. Nat., suppl. gr. 260 (second half of Psalter only)	headpieces	61-64	10

All the manuscripts are written in a characteristic "revival" script based on the popular "pearl" script of the eleventh century and frequently used during the Palaeologan period for the copying of biblical and liturgical texts.<sup>17</sup> Two variants can be distinguished: one consists of the Gospels and Lectionaries, the other of the Praxapostolos and the Psalters; generally speaking, each variant or subgroup has its own characteristic type of script and distinctive patterns of ornament. Only the script and ornaments of the Gospels in Florence (F) and Venice (M) are different, and do not go with the others; they are here included only because their inserted miniatures are part of the group.

The manuscripts must have been produced in one of the leading centers of book production in Constantinople; they can have had few, if any, rivals

<sup>17</sup> H. Hunger, *Studien zur griechischen Paläographie* (Vienna, 1954), 30; *idem*, "Die sogenannte Fettaugen-Mode in griechischen Handschriften des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts," *ByzF*, 4 (1972), 110.



in their time. Unfortunately, this center still defies identification. It was not necessarily an established scriptorium; the possibility that the manuscripts are the work of a specially assembled "team" should also be borne in mind. In any case, it is significant that most—though by no means all—of these books were intended for a distinguished and aristocratic clientèle. Several manuscripts display an unusual and ostentatious luxury, in their general planning as well as in their decoration. First of all, one notices their exceptionally broad margins. Next, the four manuscripts of the second subgroup, i.e., the Praxapostolos and the three Psalters, are entirely written in gold; some of the Gospels have full-page miniatures on inserted *bifolia*, which are otherwise blank; and, throughout, blank pages, and even accumulations of blank pages within the gatherings, are the rule to mark the beginning and end of the different sections and to achieve the desired balance of text and pictures.<sup>18</sup> Such luxury would normally be reserved for imperial dedication copies. But there are no imperial portraits, no dedicatory verses, nor any other indication that these manuscripts were imperial commissions; with one exception, they are all anonymous. This exception, the Gospels in the Vatican Library (V), has on two of its Canon Tables Palaeologan monograms, which refer to a female member of the ruling dynasty: they contain the familiar four letters Pal(aiolo)g(os), with the addition of a T at the beginning and an N at the end (pl. 19). This should be read τ(ῆς) Παλ(αιολο)γ(ι)ν(ος), in the genitivus possessivus, and rendered: (manuscript) belonging to the Palaeologina. It is the same type of monogram in the genitivus possessivus with which, for instance, the renowned statesman and humanist Theodore Metochites used to authenticate the copies of his own works that he added to the library of the Chora monastery, which he had refounded.<sup>19</sup> Recently, one of the authors of this monograph has tentatively suggested that the Palaeologan princess who owned the manuscript was Theodora Raoulaina, a niece of the Emperor Michael VIII, a highly educated, scholarly, and apparently bibliomaniac lady who died in 1300;<sup>20</sup> the identification cannot be proved, but is probable to the extent of near-certainty. The point will be taken up again in the concluding chapter.

Finally, this is not the only fact we know about the history of the manuscript. Together with the Praxapostolos now also in the Vatican Library (Vat), V was in the late fifteenth century the property of Carlotta, the last Lusignan queen of Cyprus and a Palaeologina on her mother's side, who presented them both to Pope Innocent VIII while she lived in Rome in exile.<sup>21</sup> At that

<sup>18</sup> Belting, *Das illuminierte Buch*, 63.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. I. Ševčenko, "Theodore Metochites, the Chora, and the Intellectual Trends of His Time," in P. A. Underwood, ed., *The Kariye Djami*, IV: *Studies in the Art of the Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background*, Bollingen Series, LXX (Princeton, N. J., 1975), 39.

<sup>20</sup> Belting, *Das illuminierte Buch*, 67f.; S. Fassoulakis, *The Byzantine Family of Raoul-Ral(l)es* (Athens, 1973), no. 11, p. 25f., with further bibliography.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. G. Mercati, "I manoscritti biblici greci donati da Carlotta di Lusignano ad Innocenzo VIII," *Miscellanea di storia e cultura ecclesiastica*, 4 (1906), 337f.; repr. in *idem*, *Opere minori*, II, ST, 77 (Vatican City, 1937), 480f.



time, both manuscripts possessed rich and luxurious bindings, which have unfortunately long been lost. In fact, in the whole group only a few original bindings survive. That of the Gospels in Oxford (O), decidedly one of the least accomplished, consists of tooled brown leather decorated with crowned double-headed eagles<sup>22</sup> (fig. C).

Through the above-mentioned monogram the date of the whole group in the period of the Palaeologan dynasty is firmly established. There is in fact one other manuscript containing a date: the Gospel codex in Florence (F) has a colophon dated 1285 (pl. 4c). It is true that that date has come under suspicion,<sup>23</sup> and also that the miniatures, the only part of the manuscript which really belongs to the group, are on inserted pages and may not from the beginning have been planned for the codex in which they are now contained. Still, there is no valid reason to doubt the general accuracy of the date. We shall eventually see that the miniatures in Florence are slightly earlier than the others; and, as the group is so closely interconnected that it must have been produced during a very short period of time, it may be taken that it originated during the last years of the thirteenth century.

On the following pages we shall, first of all, give a codicological survey of the manuscripts. Next, we shall discuss the miniatures, i.e., the various author portraits, the antecedents of their figural types, and the common features as well as the individual differences in their style. Finally, we shall turn to the illuminated ornaments and to their models. A concluding chapter will be devoted to an attempt to establish the special character of the team to which the manuscripts are due and to define its place in the history of Byzantine book production.

<sup>22</sup> On Byzantine bindings, cf. B. van Regemorter, "La reliure des manuscrits grecs," *Scriptorium*, 8 (1954), 3-23. I. Hutter, *Corpus der byzantinischen Miniaturenhandschriften*, I,1: *Oxford, Bodleian Library* (Stuttgart, 1977), fig. 366. Unfortunately, the notes we took on manuscripts in the Sinai and Athos monasteries are not detailed enough to allow us to make any statements about their bindings.

<sup>23</sup> Belting, *Das illuminierte Buch*, 66 note 229: it is written over an erasure, but may still be due to the original scribe. Cf. below, p. 57 and pl. 4c.



in the four main oval fields, standing out boldly against the plain white background, are linear versions of the ordinary conventional type as found in the other manuscripts. A comparison of the four related Palaeologan illuminations will show that V is much closer in style to A than to Vat and S, and, accordingly, also closer to the Comnenian archetype; the main difference is that in V the central field is left blank for the Gospel title. Precisely as in A and in the Melbourne manuscript (pl. 90), the firm grid of semicircular rinceaux provides a solid framework for the secondary branches and palmettes; the impression of fragility and fitfulness which dominates the titles of Vat and N is here conspicuously absent. The close relationship between V and A is an important point, which will have to be taken into consideration when an attempt is made to establish the chronological order of the manuscripts of our group as a whole.

Any legitimate doubts that these headpieces in V really belong to our group are decisively dispelled not only by a study of the script, but also by a comparison with some illuminations in the Sinai Lectionary, C, to which we have alluded above (p. 87). That manuscript, as will be remembered, was mentioned because it contains some headpieces which are practically identical with those in X and O and, therefore, may be claimed as an integral member of the group. But it also includes two decorations which go together with those in V rather than with the others. Thus, its headpiece for Whit Monday (pl. 32b), executed entirely in gold outline drawing, is almost a duplicate of that for Matthew in V (pl. 16a). This is true of the ornamental pattern itself as well as of its hybrid palmettes, which have here taken over completely and spread over the oval fields and even into the central space. Still another headpiece, at the beginning of the lessons for Mark (pl. 33b), is nothing but a repetition of the title on the first page of the same manuscript (pl. 32a), but in gold-outline technique; while the "metallic" palmettes still preserve their shape, the conventional ones are replaced by the hybrid variety, which dominates in V. The fact that C contains illuminations in the style of X and O as well as of V serves to confirm the essential unity of the group as a whole. It is quite obvious that C was decorated by two different masters, but their work, in spite of the different technique, is so similar in style that it may confidently be attributed to the same atelier; and this in its turn implies that the ornament of V, too, has to be included in the group. After all, the problem presented by C only repeats that of V itself, where Canon Tables and headpieces adhere to the same distinct but related traditions. We may, by the way, compare the two Lectionary titles drawn in gold with those of the better-known Sinai Lectionary, codex no. 204, from about the year 1000, in which exactly the same technique is employed.<sup>30</sup> There can be little doubt that the master of C, while copying a pattern of Comnenian origin, tried to reproduce the overall impression conveyed by a Macedonian illumination of this type.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. K. Weitzmann, *Illustrated Manuscripts at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai* (Collegeville, Minn., 1973), fig. 15.



## VI. CONCLUSION

It remains to evaluate the results of the preceding chapters in the light of our knowledge of Late Byzantine book production and illumination, and to establish the specific context into which our group belongs.

First let us summarize briefly our findings. Most of the fifteen manuscripts here discussed are written in two different types, or "canons,"<sup>1</sup> of a revival script, a strikingly successful imitation of the eleventh-century "pearl script" which was frequently used in early Palaeologan manuscripts especially for biblical and liturgical books.<sup>2</sup> Their artistic decoration is of the highest quality, and they may be counted among the finest works produced in Constantinople during the years just before 1300. Generally speaking, the illuminated ornament is of two distinct types, which correspond to those of the "canons" of the script. But these types are linked to one another by numerous cross-references. In some instances, the illumination of several manuscripts was entrusted to the same illuminator and, vice versa, occasionally the decoration of a single manuscript can be attributed to several hands. The figural miniatures in the six Gospels and the Praxapostolos are due to a small number of specially qualified artists who produced deluxe illustrations as well as miniatures of more average scope and quality. Several distinct personalities stand out whose hands may be traced in the miniatures of more than one manuscript. With a single exception, these portraits are painted on inserted single leaves or bifolios. The overall picture which emerges is so consistent that one is tempted to speak of a planned overall program for the group as a whole.

So far, everything that has been said invites the conclusion that all fifteen manuscripts were produced in a single scriptorium and in close proximity to each other. The group, however, is not so homogeneous and harmonious as the above summary would lead one to believe. There are several significant exceptions which do not fit into the picture but which are of considerable codicological interest. First, the New Testament in Baltimore<sup>3</sup> is a "plebeian" work which belongs to the group, but whose illuminated ornament (pl. 5) was entrusted to an inferior craftsman who worked in a different and almost debased style. Next, the evangelist portraits in the two Gospels in Florence and Venice<sup>4</sup> (pls. 2a, 3a, 4a, 28, 29) are products of our group, but are inserted in manuscripts whose scripts and ornaments have no connection with it.

<sup>1</sup> On the term "canon," cf. H. Fichtenau, *Mensch und Schrift im Mittelalter* (Vienna, 1946), 56ff.

<sup>2</sup> W. Schubart, *Palaeographie*, I. *Griechische Palaeographie*, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, 1, pt. 4,1 (Munich, 1925), 166; H. Hunger, *Studien zur griechischen Paläographie*, Biblos-Schriften, 5 (Vienna, 1954), 30; *idem*, "Die sogenannte Fettaugen-Mode in griechischen Handschriften des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts," *ByzF*, 4 (1972), 110.

<sup>3</sup> Catalogue no. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Catalogue nos. 7 and 14.



Finally, the portrait of David in the Psalter in the Stauronikita monastery<sup>5</sup> (pl. 49a), a miniature of slight artistic merit, stands entirely by itself and is in no way related to the other figural work of the group.

The Baltimore New Testament need not detain us for long. It must have left the atelier immediately after the completion of the text, before there was an opportunity to execute the headpieces. These were added, perhaps soon afterward, by a second-rate outsider who was unfamiliar with the traditional style of the group and repeated the same pedestrian pattern four times, virtually without change. Even the small script shows that the manuscript was never planned as a deluxe copy; the illuminated ornament certainly adds nothing to its distinction.

The special case of the inserted miniatures in the Florence and Venice Gospels finds a most natural explanation in the light of the overall character of the figural work of the group. It suggests that our miniaturists were not attached to an individual scriptorium, but were more or less their own masters. They must have been members of an independent or semi-independent team which collaborated regularly with the scribes and illuminators of our group, but which must have been free to accept commissions from outside, for instance, for miniatures to be used in manuscripts written in other scriptoria. In other words, it found time to paint spare sets of evangelist portraits which could be sold singly to outside patrons. Even more telling is the fact that the hands of two of the most outstanding masters of the team can also be traced in several contemporary icons.<sup>6</sup> The picture begins to emerge of a group of more or less "free-lance" artists working mainly, but not exclusively, for an aristocratic clientèle which commissioned icons as well as miniatures. We may even go one step further. A comparison of the icon of the double portrait of Peter and John (pl. 71) with the corresponding miniature of the Praxapostolos representing Jude and Paul (pl. 40) led us to the conclusion that it was the icon which reproduced the common model more closely, the miniature being a second-hand paraphrase compiled *ad hoc* from various sources.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the icon had priority; the miniature was only a by-product. Therefore, for all we can tell, the main means of livelihood of the team may well have been the production of icons; the painting of deluxe miniatures, for which the demand was necessarily more limited, may have been only a sideline.

It follows that the miniatures were not, as a rule, produced in the same atelier in which the manuscripts were written. It is only natural that most of them are on inserted leaves or bifolios which are not included in the numbering of the gatherings. The painters may never have seen the manuscripts for which their work was intended and, conversely, the scribes may never have known what the evangelist portraits which were to adorn their work looked like. But, again, there is one exception to this rule: the Gospel book in Oxford<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Catalogue no. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. p. 66ff.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. p. 67.

<sup>8</sup> Catalogue no. 8.



does not comply with the above pattern. Its two remaining original portraits (pls. 9a, 10a) are on ruled pages which are part of the gatherings; and this must also have been true of the other two miniatures which are now missing and are replaced by crude imitations (pls. 8a, 11a). In this one instance, miniaturist and scribe must have worked together, even though neither the miniatures nor the script are in any way different from those of the other manuscripts of the group. It is, perhaps, no coincidence that in the Oxford manuscript the headpiece for the Fourth Gospel is the work of an outsider who only produced an indifferent imitation of the current patterns; and that in this codex the system of quire numberings is conspicuously different from that of all the others. While the true significance of this fact still escapes us, there is a possibility that the gatherings were numbered not by the scribe but by the miniaturist or by the second illuminator, neither of whom were familiar with the current system. Needless to say, this will have to remain a hypothesis which cannot be proved.

However this may be, the overall impression produced by the various sets of author portraits remains extraordinarily homogeneous. We distinguished between standard editions and deluxe editions, and between different personalities who approached their tasks in different ways. In addition, we could also trace the hands of the same masters in both types of editions. Only very few miniaturists can have been involved. They may have used different idioms to express themselves; but they must have been especially brought together to collaborate as a team for the purpose of carrying out a preestablished and limited program imposed from without. There is hardly a parallel in the entire field of Byzantine illumination for this kind of planned teamwork. It accounts for the strange fact that—with the exception of the latecomer M—there is no noticeable stylistic development within the group. We had to rely on other criteria in order to arrive at a rough chronology. And that chronology served only to establish the priority of certain manuscripts vis-à-vis certain others within the general framework of a common problem. These miniatures not only defy classification in terms of stylistic progress; they must also have been produced within a very short period of time. All of them are close contemporaries. It is equally remarkable that the team has no recognizable antecedents, no immediate followers, and no really close relatives. Its production was a collective personal effort to satisfy the whims of an aristocratic patron, and as such it remains an isolated phenomenon. It collaborated for a few years to complete its task; then, for all we know, it may well have been disbanded. It included several personalities whose artistic achievements far surpass those of the majority of their contemporaries; but the group does not really hold a key position in the overall history of Palaeologan painting. Still, the possibility should not be dismissed that one day the hand of one or another of the principal masters may be recognized in other manuscripts or icons; in that case, the above conclusions may well have to be somewhat modified.

Our theory of a special team of artists brought together specifically for a task of limited scope and duration can be tested by a survey of the manuscripts



themselves—of their script, illuminated ornament, and decorative program. It has been said before that our group reflects two distinct scribal traditions or "canons": to one belong the Gospels and the Lectionaries, to the other the four manuscripts entirely written in gold, the Praxapostolos and the Psalters. The archaizing character of both "canons" is unmistakable: such features as the general effect of regularity and balance, or the mixture of minuscule and uncial letters, constantly evoke their tenth- and eleventh-century models.<sup>9</sup> But there is no *prima facie* case for attributing both subgroups of manuscripts to a single scriptorium. For example, they use different types of quire numbering. Within each "canon," however, the script is so nearly identical that one is almost tempted to give the entire production of each subgroup to a single scribe; whatever the case may be, only a very small number of scribes with identical training can have been at work. Contrary to common practice, there is no difference between the script of the Gospels and that of the Lectionaries. And even the small "utility" script of the Lavra Gospels and the Baltimore New Testament (pls. 5, 37) must be due to one of the main scribes of the first subgroup, for, apart from its minute size, it entirely conforms to that of the other Gospels and Lectionaries.

As a rule, the illuminations go together with the script. But several exceptions must be mentioned, all of which are found in the first subgroup. The case of the New Testament in Baltimore (pl. 5) has already been quoted. We have also said that the last headpiece in the Oxford Gospels (pl. 11b) is the work of an outsider. There are other comparably minor deviations from the norm. For example, only the first headpiece of the Dionysiu Gospels (pl. 31a) fits well into the group, while the last two do not belong at all. Moreover, the ornamental decoration of the Stauronikita Lectionary no. 27, with its prominent "metallic" palmettes in heart-shaped fields (pls. 34, 35) stands slightly apart from the others. But these exceptions do not really impinge upon the homogeneity of the subgroup as a whole.

There are, moreover, several other manuscripts written in the identical tradition of the first "canon" and no doubt by the same team of scribes, which have not been included in our discussion because they are not, strictly speaking, members of our group. Even so, the evidence they afford is valuable. Significantly enough, they also are Gospels and Lectionaries. One is a Gospel MS in the Vatican Library, Vat. gr. 356,<sup>10</sup> which is very beautifully written in a remarkably regular hand and has strikingly broad margins (pl. 1). Unfortunately, it has no artistic decoration: there are no evangelist portraits, no Canon

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Schubart, *Griechische Palaeographie*, 166.

<sup>10</sup> Canart and Peri, *Sussidi*, 416, with earlier bibliography. Add: W. H. Paine Hatch, *Facsimiles and Descriptions of Minuscule Manuscripts of the New Testament* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), pl. LXXVII. The manuscript consists of 48 quires, all signed in the top right corners of the first pages and in the bottom left corners of the last pages. They are all quaternions, with the exception of nos. 14, 21, 23, and 40, which are ternions, and no. 37, which is made up of eleven folios. Every Gospel starts on a new quire and is usually preceded by several blank pages. The parchment is very thick and smooth and of a dark yellowish tinge, comparable to that of the deluxe Gospels Vat. gr. 1158 (V). The first page of every Gospel is written in red ink.



Tables, and the spaces intended for the ornamental headpieces have remained blank. But the manuscript as such is a calligraphic masterpiece; and its general appearance and special deluxe character correspond so well to those of the Gospels and Lectionaries of our group, that one is tempted to imagine that, had its decoration ever been executed, it would have been similar to that of one or the other of its deluxe members. Two other manuscripts written in the identical script do have ornamental decorations, but they are related neither to one another, nor to those of our group. One is a grand Lectionary written for Constantinopolitan use, also in the Vatican Library, Vat. gr. 1523,<sup>11</sup> and, also, to quote the Vatican Catalogue, *elegantissime descriptus*. The illuminations (pl. 65) include both square and rectangular headpieces and simpler headbands, most of which recall in a general way those of our group, but are not close enough to be attributed to the same school of illuminators. This is equally true of the only other illuminated manuscript in the same script that we have so far been able to find. It is a somewhat more modest Gospel book in the Harvard College Library, codex gr. 1,<sup>12</sup> with illuminated headpieces at the beginning of the Four Gospels (pl. 89) and evangelist portraits on inserted leaves, contemporary with the manuscript. Stylistically, however, they are quite different from those produced by our team, and thus fall outside the scope of this monograph. It goes without saying that the various undecorated manuscripts written in that "canon" cannot be considered here.<sup>13</sup>

Naturally enough, the scribal "canon" of the second subgroup has fewer parallels or relatives than that of the Gospels and Lectionaries. Chrysography was always a prerogative of deluxe manuscripts and was, at least in earlier centuries, mostly used for purple codices. In the Middle Byzantine period gold letters were reserved mainly for titles or for texts of special significance:<sup>14</sup> the Letter of Eusebius, the Canon Tables, the first page of a Gospel, or the First Psalm. Manuscripts written entirely in gold on white parchment are very rare exceptions. The sumptuous Lectionary in the monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai no. 204, which immediately comes to mind, was written around the year 1000 in highly stylized golden uncials.<sup>15</sup> But in the late period with which we are here concerned, our four manuscripts seem to be unique. It can

<sup>11</sup> Canart and Peri, *Sussidi*, 603. Add: C. Gianelli, *Codices Vaticani graeci, codices 1485-1683* (Vatican City, 1950), 70ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts*, no. 53, with further bibliography.

<sup>13</sup> Only one manuscript will be mentioned here, the Commentary of Theophylact of Bulgaria on the Gospels of Mark and Luke, Vienna, theol. gr. 90; cf. Hunger, "Fettaugen-Mode," pl. ix; and H. Hunger and O. Kresten, *Katalog der griechischen Handschriften der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, III,1 (Vienna, 1976), 165f. We are most grateful to Dr. Otto Kresten for patiently answering our questions, for sending us a photocopy of the entry in the above-mentioned Catalogue before publication, and for giving us his opinion on the identity of the "basilissa Maria" mentioned in the verses at the beginning of each section of the manuscript. Here is a unique and striking instance of a late 13th-century manuscript written in "pearl script" and based on an 11th-century model.

<sup>14</sup> V. Gardthausen, *Das Buchwesen im Altertum und im byzantinischen Mittelalter* (Leipzig, 1911), 214ff.

<sup>15</sup> K. Weitzmann, *Illustrated Manuscripts at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai* (Collegeville, Minn., 1972), 14f.



hardly be expected that the scribe, or scribes, used only gold ink throughout their professional career; but it has proved difficult to trace even the same "canon" of script in other manuscripts. Comparatively close is the hand of a patristic text written on paper and dated 1299–1300, the *Epitomae de rebus gestis S. Petri* attributed to Pope Clement I, which was in the Iviron Monastery on Mt. Athos and is now in the Vatican Library, Ottob. gr. 426.<sup>16</sup> However, to attribute it with any degree of certainty to one of the scribes of our four manuscripts would be disingenuous. In any case, the precious writing material must by itself account for the fact that our small subgroup of manuscripts is far more isolated than its counterpart.

Any conclusions drawn from the above data will necessarily have to remain tentative, for it is more than probable that additional manuscripts written in the same script will eventually turn up. In any case, even at this stage one fact stands out which must be of some significance: the scribes worked under conditions remarkably similar to those which were imposed on the miniaturists. They collaborated regularly with the illuminators who were members of the team, but occasionally their manuscripts were decorated by masters with different training, coming from a different tradition. The nine Gospels and Lectionaries of our first subgroup, namely, those in which script and ornament belong together, form an impressive majority. But several others, in spite of all their merit as specimens of superior penmanship or illumination—the decoration of the Harvard Gospels certainly deserves more attention than it has received so far—remain outside the magic circle represented by the members of our group. We shall not consider them here, just as we excluded the scripts and ornaments of the Gospels in Florence and Venice. As to the nucleus of the nine manuscripts in which script and ornament do belong together, it would again appear that they were produced within a comparatively short period of time. The Lectionary in Stauronikita, with its somewhat mannered ornament (pls. 34, 35), may be a latecomer within the group, as are the miniatures of the Venice Gospels. Otherwise, there is no difference in the script or ornament that could be expressed in terms of a stylistic development.

We have tried to show in the chapter on ornament that the illuminations of the Praxapostolos and the Psalters, although, generally speaking, they are all in the same style, are individually more varied than those in the Gospels and Lectionaries, and that several hands must have been employed in their decoration. The Vatican Praxapostolos especially, with its more lavish and more varied ornamentation than any of the other manuscripts, stands in a class by itself.<sup>17</sup> In the Stauronikita Psalter, A, we even attributed the illumination of the two halves of the manuscript to two different masters.<sup>18</sup> In addition, in the case of the most spectacular ornamental pattern of the whole group, which occurs in three out of the four manuscripts, we were able to establish a clear

<sup>16</sup> Canart and Peri, *Sussidi*, 221, with further bibliography. We owe this reference to Professor G. Cavallo.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. p. 77 f.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. p. 79.



stylistic sequence which allowed us to arrange them in a definite chronological order. The square headpiece introducing Psalm 77 in the *Stauronikita Psalter* (pl. 52b) is closest to the common *Comnenian* archetype (pl. 90) and must be the earliest of the three. The same pattern recurs in the *Praxapostolos* (pl. 42) and in the *Paris Psalter*, N (pl. 56a), but the slow and deliberate pace of the solid scrolls which in A provided a firm framework for the sprouting tendrils is now transformed into an overall pattern of barren twigs which have lost their dominating function within the pattern as a whole. Even between Vat and N there is a marked difference: while in Vat something of the original regularity and symmetry of the scrolls survives, in N it has degenerated into mere interlace work. Surely N comes last in the sequence.<sup>19</sup>

Now it will be remembered that the illumination of the *Stauronikita Psalter* was begun by an inferior craftsman who abandoned the work after having executed the first half of the decoration, and whose hand cannot be traced anywhere else in the group.<sup>20</sup> Evidently his work was considered substandard by the patron. One cannot but agree, especially if our suggestion that he was also responsible for the miniature of David at the beginning of the manuscript is accepted. The new master brought in to complete the manuscript commenced with the illumination of Psalm 77; and it is precisely at this moment that our headpiece appears for the first time. No doubt it held pride of place among the patterns at the disposal of the atelier. It is only natural that in Vat and N it was conspicuously displayed on the very first pages of the texts, that is, at the beginning of Acts and of the First Psalm respectively. And we certainly cannot go wrong in assuming that also in the second *Psalter* in Paris, P, it decorated the first page of the manuscript with the text of the First Psalm, in that part which is now lost.

But the ornamental pattern we have just discussed is not particular to the *Praxapostolos* and the *Psalters*. It also occurs twice in the first subgroup, namely, in the *Vatican Gospels* (pl. 16a) and in the *Sinai Lectionary* (pl. 32b).<sup>21</sup> In the *Gospels* it is again reserved for the first headpiece and is thus singled out as the most important of the four. Here is a decisive piece of evidence which confirms our findings concerning the figural miniatures. It is not possible to attribute the two subgroups, with whose scripts and ornaments we have so far dealt separately, to two distinct scriptoria which had their own identity and which worked independently of each other. The masters had the same models at their disposal, and they used them in much the same way. The master of the headpiece to Matthew in the *Vatican Gospels* still prefers his own types of palmettes, but he inserts them into the familiar ornamental pattern which was the main showpiece in the repertory of the second subgroup. Nor is this by any means the only type of ornamental decoration to recur in both subgroups. In our chapter on ornament a fair number of similar cross-references have been listed; the illumination of practically every member

<sup>19</sup> Cf. p. 78f.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. p. 79.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. p. 89f.



of the second subgroup is in some way related to that of the first. Considering that the different "canons" of script as well as the different systems of quire numbering argue powerfully against the manuscripts themselves originating in the same scriptorium, the term "scriptorium" in the strict sense of the word loses its meaning. One should rather think in terms of a hand-picked team of renowned craftsmen brought together from various ateliers to perform a special and strictly limited task, namely, to produce a certain number of manuscripts written and decorated according to a set program and for a particular purpose. The team included: two groups of scribes of different training, one of which specialized in chrysography; illuminators; and, perhaps, miniaturists—though it must remain an open question whether the miniaturists worked along with the others or in a workshop of their own. The two types of script are quite independent of one another. The many cross-references in the illuminations, on the other hand, show that the ornamental repertory was freely available throughout the workshop. It is the ornament which is the unifying element and constitutes the strongest link between the two subgroups. And that link, as we saw, not only consists in the emergence of a common repertory of ornamental motifs, but extends to the overall program of the decoration. Practically every single manuscript is illuminated according to the same decorative scheme. It is this uniformity, this deliberate consistency that makes the manuscripts discussed in this monograph appear to be the result of a single concentrated effort. They form without any doubt the most comprehensive group planned according to a common program in the entire history of Byzantine illumination. When we also recall the striking sumptuousness and pronounced deluxe character of most of its members, the broad margins, the numerous empty pages reflecting a consistent effort to start the main divisions of the sacred books with a new quire, it will be readily seen that the group does not represent the production of a monastic scriptorium in the ordinary sense, but rather that of a heterogeneous team especially assembled to collaborate on a single project.

A few words may now be said about the possible sequence in time of the various manuscripts in our group. Our discussion of the figural miniatures led us to conclude that in all probability the evangelist portraits of F were the earliest of the series.<sup>22</sup> Those of O and B were of somewhat later date, and shared a common model, which was not F itself but a closely related manuscript which has not survived. In the deluxe group, V comes first, and Vat next; X appeared to us to be the latest of the three. Finally, M is a latecomer which draws on V as well as on O. Moreover, V must come rather early within the production of the group as a whole. It will be remembered that three of its evangelist pictures are on recto pages. The reason for this anomaly is readily apparent, for the three portraits are painted on separate bifolios which are otherwise blank. This arrangement is echoed in B, where all four portraits are (or were originally) tipped in as rectos—even though they are on single leaves which could just

<sup>22</sup> For this and the following paragraphs, cf. p. 39 ff.



as well have been inserted correctly. The most natural explanation is that the master of B knew the deluxe manuscript V and imitated its arrangement. Accordingly, B, and in all probability also O, must be of slightly later date than V.

We shall now attempt to correlate this chronological sequence with that of the principal headpieces of the Praxapostolos and the Psalters, which we established in our chapter on ornament and recapitulated on the preceding pages.

We saw that within the second subgroup the Stauronikita Psalter, A, clearly represents an experimental stage: its illustration and illumination were started by a mediocre painter, whose work was so unsatisfactory that he was discharged. The miniature of David's Repentance, which had been planned, was never executed, and the decoration of the second half of the Psalter was entrusted to the group of outstanding illuminators whose style determines the entire character of the subgroup. We may take it that the completion of A was their first task after they had joined the atelier. In the first subgroup, that of the Gospels and Lectionaries, the decorations of V and C are the exact contemporaries of A. It is gratifying to see that the early date of V within the group can be determined by two different and independent lines of enquiry, one accounting for the figural miniatures, the other for the ornament, and that in both instances the result is identical: V is a comparatively early product of the group.

The decoration of Vat represents the next stage in the development. Its ornaments are slightly more developed than those of A, V, and C; and its figural miniatures presuppose those of V. Again, the chronology we established for the ornament and that of the figural miniatures belong together. Finally, the Paris Psalter N comes last in the sequence. A classification of the second Psalter in Paris, P, is more difficult, as its ornamentation is in a way the sum total of the repertory of the entire group. Perhaps it should be placed at its very end.

One fact should be constantly kept in mind. This collaboration cannot have extended over more than a few years. The difference between the various manuscripts of the group is essentially to be expressed not in terms of years, but in terms of personalities. It is true that this applies principally to the figural work, and not as exclusively to the illuminations. Undoubtedly, the variations in the copying of the principal decorative headpiece which we traced from the Stauronikita Psalter, the Vatican Gospels, and the Sinai Lectionary through the Praxapostolos to the Paris Psalter N, represent a genuine development of style gradually freeing itself from the impact of an historical archetype. This, however, as far as we can see, is the only instance of its kind. Considering that no less than fifteen manuscripts are involved, their style presents a uniquely homogeneous picture. It must reflect the taste of a single patron, and the whole group must have been executed according to his (or her) detailed instructions.

We have reluctantly to admit that that patron has so far remained elusive. Attempts to identify him (or her) through independent evidence, such as



published correspondence, or epigrams of contemporaries, or allusions in works of Byzantine historians, have not produced any definite results. Our only reliable clue is still the monogram on the Canon Tables of the Vatican Gospels, which clearly refers to a female member of the ruling dynasty (pl. 19). It remains most tempting to identify her with Theodora Raoulaina, a niece of the Emperor Michael VIII, who was a woman of great culture and learning and a prolific correspondent, and was in close touch with some of the leading scholars and prelates of her time.<sup>23</sup> After the death of her second husband, the *protovestiarior* John Raoul, she became a nun<sup>24</sup> and refounded the monastery of St. Andrew in Krisei in Constantinople, a fact to which Maximos Planudes devoted three lengthy epigrams.<sup>25</sup> She died on the 6th of December 1300,<sup>26</sup> in "her" monastery, which had been her home ever since she had taken the veil.

It appears that Theodora was an avid collector of books.<sup>27</sup> When the learned patriarch Gregory of Cyprus resigned in 1289, she sheltered him with his library in the *monydrion* of Aristine which she had caused to be built next to "her" monastery.<sup>28</sup> She also engaged in literary activities herself: she wrote a biography of the brothers Theodore and Theophanes, the *Graptoi* of the iconoclastic persecution of the ninth century;<sup>29</sup> and copied in her own hand a manuscript of the *Orationes* of Aelius Aristides, which still exists and is now in the Vatican Library.<sup>30</sup> In addition, she presented a manuscript of the Gospels, with the commentary of Theophylact of Bulgaria, to the Great Lavra on Mt. Athos. That manuscript, too, has withstood the ravages of time and is now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale.<sup>31</sup> In all probability these accidental survivals represent only a tiny fraction of her scholarly pursuits and interests. Although none of these facts points decisively to Theodora as the patron who commissioned our group of manuscripts, certainly no other member of the imperial family has an equal claim to our consideration. Moreover, Theodora's death in 1300 fits in well with the results of our art-historical investigation. For reasons of style, our team must have been at work for some years before that date, and must by then have completed its program. Though final proof is still lacking, our hypothesis appears very probable indeed.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. S. Fassoulakis, *The Byzantine Family of Raoul-Ral(l)es* (Athens, 1973), no. 11, p. 25f., with references to earlier literature, mostly based on D. Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus). A Genealogical and Prosopographical Study*, DOS, XI (Washington, D. C., 1968), no. 14, p. 16ff.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. S. Kugeas, "Zur Geschichte der Münchener Thukydideshandschrift Augustanus F," *BZ*, 16 (1907), 588-609.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. K. Wendel, "Planudea," *BZ*, 40 (1940), 426.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Kugeas, "Zur Geschichte," 591.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 594.

<sup>28</sup> Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos*, 17.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>30</sup> Canart and Peri, *Sussidi*, 656, with further bibliography. E. Follieri, ed., *Exempla scripturarum*, fasc. IV, *Codices graeci Bibliothecae Vaticanae selecti* . . . (Vatican City, 1969), no. 40 (cod. Vat. gr. 1899).

<sup>31</sup> R. Devreesse, *Catalogue des manuscrits grecs*, II. *Le fonds Coislin*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Manuscrits (Paris, 1945), 122 (MS Coislin 128).



In any case, the imperial princess to whose patronage we owe the group of manuscripts here under discussion, whoever she may have been, was a member of the cultural élite of Byzantium. If our identification is correct, she took the veil after she had been twice widowed, and retired to a monastery which she had rebuilt at her own expense. In this she conformed to the current standards of aristocratic behavior: it was a matter of honor for a person in the public eye to found, or refound, a monastery—to be its *ktitor*; the more magnificent the foundation, the greater the prestige accruing to its founder.<sup>32</sup> It must have been in her own monastery, St. Andrew in Krisei,<sup>33</sup> that Theodora assembled the handpicked team of scribes and illuminators who produced our manuscripts. Some of these, like the magnificent Sinai Lectionary, may have served as presents to the prelates with whom the exalted patron was on friendly terms; but most must have been intended for her own private library. The imperial monogram mentioned above is striking evidence of the personal pride the highborn lady took in the ownership of her manuscripts. It has already been recalled that Theodore Metochites, a near contemporary of the Raoulaina, used the same type of monogram to identify the copies of his own works that he deposited in the library of the Chora monastery, of which he was the *ktitor*.<sup>34</sup> The Psalter, especially, was the liturgical book *par excellence* for private devotion; it was frequently produced in pocket-size format for the benefit of laics.<sup>35</sup> The division into kathismata of all three Psalters of our group points to their use for recital at the Daily Office.<sup>36</sup> Still, it appears that, in spite of their sacred subject matter, all these manuscripts were commissioned for reasons of personal ambition rather than of religious devotion or humility. Those beautifully written and exquisitely illuminated Gospels and Psalters are first and foremost specimens of superior penmanship and artistic taste; the correct reproduction of the sacred text came as a poor second. It is a matter of common knowledge that deluxe manuscripts are frequently characterized by sloppy copying.<sup>37</sup> The lists of the Canon Tables in the two special editions of the Gospels<sup>38</sup> and the negligent numbering of the Psalms in the Psalter in Paris(N)<sup>39</sup> are eloquent witnesses of scribal carelessness. The princely owner treasured those manuscripts mainly as *objets d'art*; in all probability they were not even intended for daily use.

<sup>32</sup> G. Ostrogorsky, "Observations on the Aristocracy in Byzantium," *DOP*, 25 (1971), 31.

<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, this will remain a hypothesis, for the *typicon* of the monastery has not been preserved; cf. P. de Meester, "Les typiques de fondation (Τυπικά Κτητορικά)," *SBN*, 6 (1940) (= Atti del V<sup>o</sup> Congresso internazionale di Studi bizantini), 489–508. On independent monasteries, cf. E. Herman, "Ricerche sulle istituzioni monastiche bizantine. Typica ktetorica, caristicari e monasteri liberi," *OCP*, 6 (1940), 293–375.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. our Introduction, above, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> On an imperial pocket-size Lectionary, cf. K. Weitzmann, "Ein kaiserliches Lektionar einer byzantinischen Hofschule," in *Festschrift Karl M. Swoboda zum 28. Januar 1959* (Vienna-Wiesbaden, 1959), 309–20.

<sup>36</sup> J. A. Lamb, *The Psalms in Christian Worship* (London, 1962), 61.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. K. Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex* (Princeton, 1947), 154.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. p. 81ff.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Catalogue no. 9, p. 114.



It must be admitted that this explanation accounts only for the deluxe copies of the group, namely, for the two Gospels V and X, the Praxapostolos and the three Psalters. It can hardly be applied to the two manuscripts of the standard edition, in Baltimore and Oxford, nor to any of those manuscripts of the first subgroup which have no original figural decoration. The exceptional case of the Sinai Lectionary has been mentioned before. But the others—the Gospels in Dionysiu and Lavra and the Lectionaries in Ivron and Stauro-nikita—although all of them are attributable to a greater or lesser extent to the same team of scribes and illuminators, are decidedly not of a deluxe quality. It may be doubted whether they were ever meant to be incorporated into the private library of the princess. It may be presumed that they were either consigned to the monastic library proper, or used as presents for somewhat less privileged personages, members of the lower orders who had some claim on the gratitude of the *ktitor*. Finally, the Gospels in Florence and Venice need not be considered here at all. Their only link with the group is that they contain evangelist portraits produced in the same atelier which also supplied our team with figural miniatures. We have suggested before that our patron had no monopoly and the atelier was at liberty to accept other assignments as well. For all we know, these two Gospels had as little connection with the imperial princess as the icons which were painted in the same atelier: while such a connection cannot be downright excluded, there is also nothing to prove it.

The fact that it was an imperial princess—whatever her name—who commissioned our group of manuscripts with the intent of adding the most splendid of them to her own library, is also significant from another point of view, that of the models which were at the disposal of the team and, especially, of the atelier of painters to whom the figural miniatures are due. It has become plain that among them must have been precious cimelia several hundred years old at the time: they belonged to a past "golden age," the Macedonian Renaissance of the tenth century; and they were chosen deliberately and with discrimination. We have suggested earlier on that one of these priceless manuscripts still exists, the Gospel no. 43 in the Stauro-nikita monastery which served as a secondary model for the evangelist portraits of both the standard and the special editions of our group.<sup>40</sup> We do not propose to repeat our detailed arguments at this stage. But it is well to remember that that manuscript, together with its close relatives the Joshua Rotulus<sup>41</sup> and the archetype of the Paris Psalter,<sup>42</sup> should be attributed to a court scriptorium, and that in all probability all three of them were kept on the shelves of the imperial library throughout the Middle and Late Byzantine periods. It would have been easier for a cousin of the reigning emperor than for any ordinary mortal to borrow manuscripts from that library and deposit them for a limited period in the atelier of her choice,

<sup>40</sup> Cf. p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> K. Weitzmann, "The Character and Intellectual Origins of the Macedonian Renaissance," in *idem*, *Studies*, 213.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. H. Buchthal, "The Exaltation of David," *JWarb*, 37 (1974), 330–33.



with precise instructions about the use that was to be made of them. This certainly seems to have been the case with the Stauronikita Gospels. Unfortunately, it is impossible to say whether it was also true of the first and principal model used for the evangelist portraits—though one is inclined to think so. But we have to admit that that model still remains something of a mirage. Finally, considering the supreme quality of the ornamental work in the Praxapostolos, especially of that part which can also be traced back to a tenth-century source, one is again led to a similar conclusion. It has been mentioned before that its overall character and quality recall those of the tenth-century *Hippiatrica* codex in Berlin,<sup>43</sup> also an imperial commission and probably also part of the imperial library. As it was the high-born patron, the *ktitor*, who herself devised the artistic program of our group and specified the task of the team, we may well presume that she personally negotiated the loan from the most sumptuous library that existed in Constantinople.

Seen as a whole, the group of manuscripts to which the present monograph is devoted stands out as one of the most remarkable achievements in the field of book production that has survived from Byzantine times. Had it belonged to an earlier stage in the history of Byzantine civilization, one would probably not hesitate to call it "imperial"; it is a well-known fact that throughout the Middle Byzantine period most deluxe creations in the representational arts were in some way or other connected with the court. But after the reestablishment of the Greek Empire in 1261 things were never the same again. There are no illustrated manuscripts written for the Emperors Michael VIII or Andronicus II;<sup>44</sup> and the very existence of an imperial scriptorium during the period about 1300 is more than doubtful.<sup>45</sup> Just as the Palaeologan emperors in their impoverished state<sup>46</sup> no longer appear as munificent patrons of the arts in other fields, so, we may assume, they failed to follow their predecessors' practice of sponsoring the production of deluxe volumes decorated with their own portraits.<sup>47</sup> The new patrons were either members of the larger imperial family—though not necessarily of the court circle—or belonged to the wealthy landowning aristocracy. In a way, our manuscripts may be considered substitutes, even equivalents, of the imperial art of bygone times. Our princess wanted to emulate the patronage as well as the generosity of the emperors of the Macedonian and Comnenian dynasties. Yet, the very fact that the group not only includes manuscripts *de grand luxe* but also a fair number of rather ordinary works of no more than average quality reflects the changed conditions

<sup>43</sup> Weitzmann, *Buchmalerei*, 16f.; R. Froehner, "Die Berliner Prachthandschrift der griechischen *Hippiatrica*," in *80 Jahre H. Hauptner, 1857-1937* (Berlin-Solingen, 1937), 24-44.

<sup>44</sup> The portraits of these Emperors in the Pachymeres manuscript in Munich, gr. 442, are not donor portraits but, in all probability, are copied from diplomas; cf. Belting, *Das illuminierte Buch*, 24f; I. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leiden, 1976), 166-70, 250.

<sup>45</sup> Belting, *Das illuminierte Buch*, 54.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Ostrogorsky, "Observations on the Aristocracy in Byzantium" (above, note 32), 19.

<sup>47</sup> Apart from the exceptions listed in note 44, two diplomas with the portrait of Andronicus II should be mentioned; cf. Belting, *Das illuminierte Buch*, 30, with earlier bibliography. But these are legal documents; the portraits are not donor portraits.



of the times. Sumptuous manuscripts with figural illustrations of the type of the Vatican Gospels and Praxapostolos must have been even more costly to produce than during the preceding centuries. It may perhaps even be argued that the commission of the manuscripts of the standard edition does particular credit to the *ktitor*. It is true that she thought first of herself, of her own library and monastery, and of the learned high clerics who must have benefited from her bounty; certainly she exploited her privileged position to the full. It would seem, however, that, at the same time, she did not neglect the humbler claims of those members of her entourage who were satisfied to own volumes which only modestly reflected the glories of the coveted deluxe manuscripts and which would hardly have attracted our special attention had they survived in isolation.